



Every Student. **EVERY DAY.**

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Testimony on HB 2612

Written by Blake A. Vargas, Superintendent

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

I truly appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding HB2612.

At Caney Valley, we have embraced the motto, "Every Student. Every Day," and strive to not only meet standards for accreditation but exceed them. School accreditation for our district is so much more than a series of numbers, completing reports, or debating how dollars should be spent. Every decision we make every single day as educators is how we can most effectively impact our students. We understand that schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. In those instances where schools don't show growth or meet expectations, KSDE provides support and guidance to help districts review their processes. If the goal is truly about our children and their education, accreditation should not be used as a punishment based on interpretation of the law. Instead, accreditation should only remain in the department with the tools, experience and understanding to support schools and their students, which is KSDE.

To strip accreditation from a district and only allow reinstatement after a KSDE audit is especially concerning. In my experience, auditors are by their nature, trained to focus on numbers, and not necessarily the factors leading to changes that have affected those numbers. Given the current workload burdening the auditors, increasing their responsibilities could inevitably compromise the quality and accuracy of their work.

It is only fair to ask that the same expectations be placed on our legislature that is being asked of our school systems. Considering the state's budget history, it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education, possibly due to differing interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Regardless, I believe it's imperative not to entangle schools in legal interpretations, diverting them from their core mission of educating students.

Schools are sufficiently overseen and governed by the State School Board and our locally elected Board of Education. At Caney Valley, our local board, who have a vested and sincere interest in our schools, and more importantly, our students, ensure that our educators adhere to the highest standards. If there was ever any intentional breaking of any laws, our Board of Education would certainly address the issue.

Blake A. Vargas – Superintendent

USD#436 - Caney Valley Schools